URBAN COMBAT

Put the brakes on four-hour drives to Grafenwöhr, Stuttgart troops will soon be able to conduct urban operations within minutes of post.

Story by Brian H. Temple

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District is managing Mickan General-Bau-Gessellschaft Amberg mbH & Company's construction of a concrete block MOUT (Military Operations in Urban Terrain) site that will enable Navy SEAL, Army Special Forces and other units to train locally in an urban environment.

Nestled among pine trees near Böblingen, this mock town composed of a half dozen generic masonry buildings will represent just about any urban terrain. The site will become a keen training asset, one designed to last.

"This facility will allow units in USAREUR (United States Army Europe) to train to their mission essential tasks to standard," said Daniel Wemhoff, range and training land program coordinator for the Regional Training Support Center in Mannheim, part of the 7th Army Training Command. "The importance of units being trained in urban combat operations has been re-enforced by current world events." The 7th ATC funded the project he said.

Stuttgart is pivotal because it is expected to be an enduring installation, said former 6th Area Support Group Director of Public Works, Lt. Col. Josef Hallatschek. Not only will local units train here, but USAREUR units, including those from Vicenza, Italy, may use the complex as well, he said.

Having the site here "is just another capability that makes us integral to the training right here in Europe," Hallatschek said. It saves soldiers hours of driving time to get to Grafenwöhr, located near the Czech border, and "is more economical based on the all the [training] requirements, and how often they have to train," he said.

There will be two, two-story buildings, complete with basements. One rooftop is built with a three-foot high concrete safety wall to allow troops to rappel from helicopters and train for rapid personnel extractions, one of many types of training they will conduct on the site, said David Bradley, quality assurance representative with Europe District.

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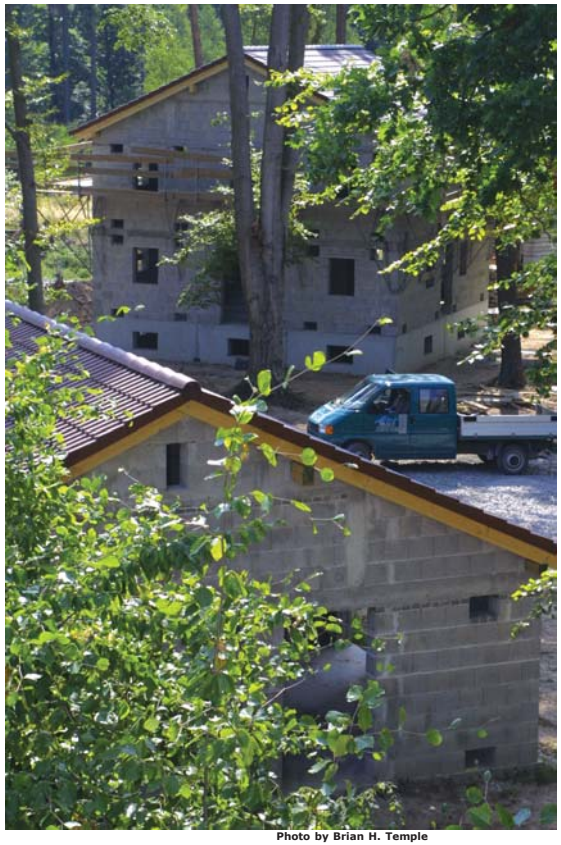

Photo by Brian H. Temple

One multi-room building will shelter troops during classroom instruction and then it will be used for active training. The three remaining single-story buildings have similar layouts with standard A-frame roofs.

Although the site may appear generic, the buildings were designed to meet the needs of specialized training. Plywood facing covers concrete block walls to prevent chipping from training ammunitions, Bradley said. The outer layer will be installed over the initial sheets allowing for a two-inch space to catch plastic pellets and paint ball style ammunition. This will extend the life of the concrete walls and save money because the plywood sheets are replaceable.

Photo by Raymond Barnard

◄ **Two of the five concrete buildings at Stuttgart's new MOUT (Military Operations in Urban Terrain) site. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is managing construction of the urban operations training site and is expected to turn it over to the 7th Army Training Command in October.**

Longevity to the buildings is the primary reason for this extra measure, but the troops get the added benefit of safety. The panels will cut down on ricochets.

Steven Roberts, Project Manager with Europe District said the buildings have window openings without actual windows, and the floors are level and smooth which helps cut down on accidents. The customer was pleased with the floors during the latest inspection, as it will reduce tripping hazard, Roberts said.

Additional ventilation openings were added to the original design at the request of the USAREUR Safety Office to reduce accumulation of propellant dust while firing training rounds inside the building, Roberts said. The terrain around the buildings is realistic, but the structures were built with safety in mind to allow for better training, he added.

The customers agree that economics played a big part in why the community decided to go with the Corps.

"We thought about doing it in house, but once we started looking at all the different agencies we felt that the Corps was best staffed to handle it. This way they can work the environmental piece and any of the coordination with the local agencies. We've had a couple of instances dealing with environmental concerns where they were really able to help us out," Hallatschek said.

With the project about 95 percent complete and the final inspection scheduled for October, the customer is expected to get the finished project in November.

"Their expertise in the construction and cost control of projects of this magnitude made them a very logical choice to carry out this project," Wemhoff said. "The Corps of Engineers is the recognized source of expertise for construction of such training facilities throughout the Army. … The expertise, dedication and attitude of the Corps in accomplishing the project … have been really great."

Photo by Brian H. Temple

▲ **The early stages of construction.**

◄ **Navy SEAL, Army Special Forces, and other units will soon be able to conduct urban combat training within minutes of post.**

▼ **This one-story building at Stuttgart's new MOUT site will be used for class instruction as well as combat training. This multi-room structure is typical of buildings throughout the U.S. European Command area of responsibility.**

Photo by Steven Roberts